Amendments to the Claims:

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions and listings of claims in the instant application:

Listing of Claims:

1.   (Currently Amended) A computer-implemented method for facilitating real time communications ~~for~~ among Internet users having ~~a shared interest~~ similarities comprising the steps of:

monitoring a plurality of currently active user sessions, each session being associated with a different user;

retrieving session data associated with the currently active user sessions from a data store and evaluating the session data to identify ~~identifying~~ at least one real-time ~~affinity~~ similarity among the currently active user sessions ~~based on session data associated with the currently active user sessions, an affinity being defined as a shared interest among users of two or more user sessions~~;

responsive to said ~~affinity~~ similarity identification, presenting a user interface in the user sessions having the identified similarity to prompt the users of the user sessions having the identified similarity to respond whether they want to engage in real time communication with other users of the user sessions having the identified similarity;

receiving a response from the users of the user sessions having the identified similarity and forming a user group for users who want to engage in real time communication ~~of user sessions having an identified affinity~~; and

establishing a communication pathway among the user sessions of the user group and providing access to an interaction application ~~facilitating~~ to facilitate the users of the user group to engage in real time communication.

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2-4.   (Cancelled).

5.   (Currently Amended) The method of claim [[4]] 1, wherein said step of establishing a communication pathway further comprises the step of opening at least one of a chat session, an instant messaging session, a newsgroup, and a shared application.

6.   (Currently Amended) The method of claim 1, wherein said ~~identifying step includes the step of evaluating~~ session data includes session cookies associated with said user sessions.

7.   (Currently Amended) The method of claim 1, wherein said ~~identifying step includes the step of evaluating~~ session data includes session objects associated with said user sessions.

8.   (Original) The method of claim 7, wherein said session objects comprise at least one datum selected from the group consisting of a URL which has been accessed, an amount of time on-line, an item in a shopping cart, and a user identifier.

9.   (Original) The method of claim 8, wherein said user identifier comprises at least one of a postal code, an area code, a city, a county, a state, a province, a country and a continent.

10-22. (Cancelled).

23.   (Currently Amended) A machine-readable storage having stored thereon a computer program having a plurality of code sections, said code sections executable by a machine for causing the machine to perform the steps of:

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monitoring a plurality of currently active user sessions, each session being associated with a different user;

retrieving session data associated with the currently active user sessions from a data store and evaluating the session data to identify ~~identifying~~ at least one real-time ~~affinity~~ similarity among the currently active user sessions ~~based on session data associated with the currently active user sessions, an affinity being defined as a shared interest among users of two or more user sessions~~;

responsive to said ~~affinity~~ similarity identification, presenting a user interface in the user sessions having the identified similarity to prompt the users of the user sessions having the identified similarity to respond whether they want to engage in real time communication with other users of the user sessions having the identified similarity;

receiving a response from the users of the user sessions having the identified similarity and forming a user group for users who want to engage in real time communication ~~of user sessions having an identified affinity~~; and

establishing a communication pathway among the user sessions of the user group and providing access to an interaction application ~~facilitating~~ to facilitate the users of the user group to engage in real time communication.

24-26. (Cancelled).

27.   (Currently Amended) The machine-readable storage of claim [[26]] 23, wherein said step of establishing a communication pathway further comprises the step of opening at least one of a chat session, an instant messaging session, a newsgroup, and a shared application.

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28.   (Currently Amended) The machine-readable storage of claim 23, wherein said ~~identifying step includes the step of evaluating~~ session data includes session cookies associated with said user sessions.

29.   (Currently Amended) The machine-readable storage of claim 23, wherein said ~~identifying step includes the step of evaluating~~ session data includes session objects associated with said user sessions.

30.   (Previously Presented) The machine-readable storage of claim 29, wherein said session objects comprise at least one datum selected from the group consisting of a URL which has been accessed, an amount of time on-line, an item in a shopping cart, and a user identifier.

31.   (Previously Presented) The machine-readable storage of claim 30, wherein said user identifier comprises at least one of a postal code, an area code, a city, a county, a state, a province, a country and a continent.

32.   (Cancelled).

33.   (Currently Amended) A computer-implemented system for facilitating real time communications ~~for~~ among Internet users having ~~a shared interest~~ similarities comprising:

        a data store for storing session data of a plurality of user sessions, each session being associated with a different user; and

        a processor adapted to:

        monitor a plurality of currently active user sessions, each session being associated with a different user;

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retrieve session data associated with the currently active user sessions from the data store and evaluate the session data to identify at least one real-time similarity among the currently active user sessions;

responsive to said similarity identification, present a user interface in the user sessions having the identified similarity to prompt the users of the user sessions having the identified similarity to respond whether they want to engage in real time communication with other users of the user sessions having the identified similarity;

receive a response from the users of the user sessions having the identified similarity and forming a user group for users who want to engage in real time communication; and

establish a communication pathway among the user sessions of the user group and provide access to an interaction application to facilitate the users of the user group to engage in real time communication.

~~means for monitoring a plurality of user sessions, each session being associated with a different user;~~

~~means for identifying at least one real-time affinity among the user sessions based on session data associated with currently active user sessions, an affinity being defined as a shared interest among users of two or more user sessions;~~

~~means for, responsive to the affinity identification, forming a user group for users of user sessions having an identified affinity; and~~

~~means for facilitating the users of the user group to engage in real time communication.~~

34. (Cancelled).

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